



## Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

## A WEDDING IN SOUTH CHINA

---

BY MISS YING-MEI CHUN,

Wellesley, Mass.

---

A wedding in South China is characterized by gay and noisy parades, and big and elaborate feasts. It is more attractive and expressive of merriment than an American wedding, but is less solemn and almost too trivial to mark the turning point of the history of two lives. There is no occasion, unless it is New Year, in China which gives a greater pleasure to youths and children than a wedding. There is nothing which grown people as well as children so thoroughly enjoy. Every person in town may enjoy seeing the parades and every friend or relative, no matter how distant, is invited to participate in the feasts which are prepared at the wedding.

Since a wedding is such an elaborate affair, it is not confined to one day. The ceremonies begin at least ten days before the actual marriage. They begin with what is called in the Cantonese dialect "The passing of the big parade." This "passing of the big parade" is a gift made by the bridegroom's parents to the bride's family. Unlike the gift which is either delivered by the postman or expressman, it is one that is carried in trays measuring three feet by six by twenty or thirty men dressed in festive costume. The gift consists largely of eatables, such as cakes, candies, nuts, ham, both cooked and live geese, chickens and ducks. Besides the eatables there are two or three articles which are meant especially for the bride. They are ornaments for the hair and a small sum of money. The bride's family accepts almost everything in the trays. In order to show their gratitude and appreciation they send back in the trays their good wishes, which are expressed in small red packages of money and also baked pigs, which are a sign of prosperity. As both families are unable to consume all the eatables on hand, they distribute them among their friends and relatives.

While they are making this distribution they take the occasion to invite the wedding guests. From the time the invitations are issued to the wedding day the two families are busily engaged in

completing their preparations. In a tactful manner the mother of the bride first announces the marriage to her daughter. Immediately the girl runs to her room to hide and weep, as a sign of her deep sorrow at having to leave her home. She refuses to appear at meals or come out to see anybody. During this time her intimate friends and companions come to stay with her and cheer her up. Since the marriage has been announced, nothing needs to be kept secret. The mother openly packs the trunks and puts in them articles which her daughter has expressed her desire for. She employs tailors to make her daughter's dresses and bed clothes; packers to fasten the furniture together; and decorators to decorate and arrange the trunks, bureaus, chairs, tables, cooking utensils and other things, so that they may look attractive in the parade. Three days before the wedding these articles are removed by men in festive costume to the house of the bridegroom. While the bride's mother is preparing the trousseau the bridegroom's parents are vacating several rooms where they may place the furniture of their daughter-in-law. As soon as the furniture arrives, they put it in place and the house is ready for wedding feasts and guests.

On the third day, that is, the wedding day, a long procession composed of lanterns, bands, flags, clowns and a gilded sedan chair, reaches the door of the bride at the time set by the augur. This arrival of the procession means that the bride is to be taken away from her parents' home. The two Chinese words, one used for the marriage of a man and the other for the marriage of a woman, are very descriptive of a Chinese marriage. The word for the marriage of a man is "take," that is, to take possession of some one or to take some one to his home. The word applying to the marriage of a woman is "cross over the door." The procession comes to take some one who is to cross the door or come out of her home.

The bride never intends to leave her home as soon as the procession arrives. She lingers until night assures the mother that it is unwise for her daughter to tarry any longer. She pleads at the door of her daughter's room for admittance. When she fails in her attempt, she, with the help of the servants, forces the door open. Finally the daughter and her companions give up resisting and she herself permits the servants to dress her. After she is properly covered with red, the color of the wedding garment, from head to foot, she is brought out to the parlor, where she listens to

the prayers of an augur employed for the occasion, and where she bows before the household gods, ancestral tablets and her parents, to bid them farewell. Although the wedding is represented as very gay and happy, this moment of separation is almost too sad for the friends and relatives to bear. It is evident that the merrymaking pertains mostly to the family that is to receive the bride and not the family that is to part with her. After the parting ceremony the girl is taken to the gilded sedan chair. Amid the noise of fire-crackers and inharmonious music the procession moves on. It is customary for the younger brothers to accompany their sister to her destination and then return to report her safe arrival.

While the groom's family are drinking and feasting the parade arrives. The groom comes out and knocks at the door of the sedan chair with his fan. He makes a bow to the chair and one to each of the bride's brothers. After having done so, he returns to the house. By this time the door of the sedan chair is open and the bride is taken into the house. Both the bride and groom kneel before the ancestral tablets and household gods and pay their honors to the aged relatives. After this the bride is taken to her room, where she awaits the groom to lift her veil. After the veil is taken off she puts on a beautiful court robe and a pearly crown.

She is ready to appear before the relatives and friends of her husband. She, with the assistance of her servants, bows before the guests and serves them tea. Each guest in return for this kind favor hands over to her a gift in money. The amount varies according to the ability of the donor and his relation to the family.

After feasting, and as a means of amusing themselves, the guests play jokes mercilessly upon the newly married couple, especially the bride. They make the bashful bride guess conundrums, puzzles, do tricks which belong only to magicians, and answer embarrassing questions. Should she fail or refuse to do anything that is asked of her, she is subject to a forfeit either in money or in kind. Such merriment and joking last all night.

On the morning of the third day after marriage the bride makes her parents a visit. The evening of that same day the groom pays his first respects to his father-in-law and mother-in-law. In his honor the parents-in-law give him a feast. After the feast is over he returns home. This formal ceremony of the third day marks the close of the wedding festivities.